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ABSTRACT

Despite the hopes of social scientists and civil rights activists that school desegregation would close the educational gap between blacks and whites, a full generation of effort has not resulted in parity between the achievement levels of black and white students. School desegregation alone is not the answer to ending achievement differences. Constraints which militate against school desegregation having positive outcomes include racial discrimination, disproportionate racial representation, rigid educational and disciplinary procedures, and cultural bias. The model presented in this paper is designed to help urban school administrators to select a program which would neutralize the constraints in the desegregated school environment and enhance the probability that school desegregation will have positive outcomes for children. The model is based upon research and data related to desegregation goals, factors that impede success, and programs that have been designed or proven to overcome those factors. Such programs include the provision of breakfast to students, team teaching/learning programs, big brother/big sister programs, training programs for mothers, and programs to diagnose problems that impede learning. In addition, formative evaluation is an essential part of the plan. (Author/GC)

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A MODEL FOR PLANNING AND IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES IN URBAN SCHOOLS

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A MODEL FOR LOCAL DESEGREGATION PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Rationale For School Desegregation

Before the landmark supreme court decision Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483, 1954, Kenneth Clark, a leading social scientist and now a regent in New York State wrote that school desegregation alone would raise black children's self-concept and academic performance to match those of whites. (Clark, 1955) Clark was reflecting the prevalent conventional wisdom of the time espoused by many social scientists, but he and others in his field were unable to provide a scientific basis for their opinions. Despite this fact, many civil rights leaders embrace this caveat delineated by Clark and his counterparts as being axiomatic.

The disillusionment of civil rights leaders with the status quo (racially segregated schools) should be evident. Lauter and Howe (1970) among others have noted that blocking of black upward mobility and the institutionalization of white privilege have historically been among the chief purposes of American education. The denial of equal educational opportunities to blacks in public schools has served effectively to limit black competition in key social, economic and political areas. Under these circumstances, it became clear to many civil rights leaders that no effective progress could be made in the quest for black equality until the differential between the achievement of blacks and whites in the public schools was substantially closed. (Humphrey, 1964) Just as the Irish, the Jews and other groups had utilized the public schools to prepare them for careers in medicine, law, engineering and other professional fields, the surest route for blacks out of the ranks of the underclass rested in their ready access to first class educational opportunities. The Coleman Report found that

the longer blacks stayed in school the further they fell behind white youngsters in the development of those skills which are critical to making a living and participating fully in modern society (U.S. Office of Education, 1966)

Much of the hope of the civil rights community in the area of educational reform centered on the strategy of school desegregation alone. The idea of school desegregation as a remedy for the unequal treatment of blacks in the public schools received its most forceful impetus from the Supreme Court landmark decision in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483, 1954. The court held in the Brown decision that segregated educational facilities for blacks and whites were inherently unequal. In rendering this decision, the court went to great lengths to underscore the deleterious effects of segregation of black children by saying, "to separate them (black children) from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone." (Brown vs. Board of Education, 347, U.S. 483, 1954)

After Brown

After the Brown decision, many proponents of equal educational opportunities for blacks and other disadvantaged minorities basked in a state of euphoria subscribing to the myth created by Kenneth Clark and some of his contemporaries that school desegregation per se would bring about parity in achievement between whites and blacks, in addition to other disadvantaged minorities.

However, two decades of experience with desegregation strongly suggest that increased parity of educational outputs between blacks and whites is not necessarily an outcome of the desegregation process. (Kirp, 1976) After completion of an exhaustive analysis of the research literature, St. John

concluded that "on the basis of the evidence, school desegregation must be judged neither a demonstrated success or a demonstrated failure." (St. John, 1979) St. John also reported that although desegregation has sometimes raised and rarely lowered the scores of blacks on standardized achievement tests, it has not rapidly closed the academic achievement gap of black and white children. In addition, she discovered that school desegregation has frequently lowered the self-esteem and the vocational aspirations of the black child. (St. John, 1975) Another extensive literature review by Weinberg tends to corroborate the conclusions of St. John. Among Weinberg's most startling conclusions is that "a majority of research studies on school desegregation and self-esteem indicate that during desegregation the self-esteem of minority students is lowered." (Weinberg, 1979) After an assessment of the research literature, St. John noted that "school desegregation alone does not accrue any automatic benefits." The positive or negative outcomes that accrue from the school desegregation process are contingent to a great degree on strategies used by school administrators in implementing the school desegregation process and revising it once it goes into effect.

These disclosures about school desegregation research usher in a new era for those who advocate school desegregation as a vehicle to bring about optimal educational outputs for blacks and other disadvantaged minority children. It is no longer enough to advocate school desegregation alone. It is mandatory that we take the next step and stress the importance of certain policies, practices and programs being present in desegregated schools to enhance the probability that school desegregation will have positive outcomes for blacks and other disadvantaged minority students. Green suggested that if schools follow harmful practices (e.g. tracking), it may be propitious for blacks and other disadvantaged minorities to remain in segregated schools. (Green, 1979)

Desegregation Goals

The goals to which advocates of school desegregation generally aspire are of four general types: (1) Increased racial tolerance and understanding among children and adults of all races, (2) Improvement of the academic performance of low achievers, (3) Enhancement of the self-concept and aspirations among disadvantaged minorities and (4) Increased social equality through increased disadvantaged minority access to higher education, high status jobs and higher incomes. (Hawley and Rist, 1975)

The research literature reviews by St. John and Weinberg among others, indicate that the goals revered by proponents of school desegregation have not been accomplished in many instances. It is most unfortunate that school desegregation has been a cruel hoax on many who are most dependent on school desegregation for redress. For this cohort, school desegregation itself has proved to be a most discriminatory process (e.g. students from this subset have been tracked into the lowest academic tracks, suspended in large numbers, and pushed out of school with great frequency). (Arnez, 1978)

Factors That Research and Desegregation Experience Indicate Impede Desegregation Success

There are many constraints in the extrinsic and intrinsic environment which militate against accomplishment of goals coveted by those who view school desegregation as a vehicle to ameliorate many problems encountered by the American minority underclass in public school systems throughout this country. The proliferation of school desegregation research presents intrinsic and extrinsic environmental constraints which tend to inhibit the accomplishment of desegregation goals. These goals have been dichotomized into intrinsic and extrinsic ecological constraints and are illustrated on the following page in Tables I and II.

Table I

Intrinsic Ecological Constraints Which Militate Against The Accomplishment of School Desegregation Goals

-- No inservice programs
-- Rigid discipline procedures
-- The absence of multicultural curriculum
-- Inept school management
-- High suspension rates
-- Rigid traditional classroom models
-- Placing blacks and other disadvantaged minorities in special education and other lower track classes

Table I presents intrinsic ecological constraints in the school desegregation planning environment which militate against the accomplishment of desegregation planning goals (e.g. increasing academic achievement of minority students and raising the aspiration levels of minority students. Table II presents the extrinsic ecological constraints noted by school desegregation researchers which militate against desegregation goals. These ecological environmental constraints were extrapolated from the school desegregation research reviews of St. John (1975), Cohen (1975), Weinberg (1975) and Epps (1975).

Table II

Extrinsic Ecological Constraints Which Militate Against the Accomplishment of School Desegregation Goals

-- Students with psychological problems
-- Low student socio-economic mix
-- Great disparities between the socio-economic levels of black and white students
-- One-way bussing plans
-- Low teacher expectations
-- Rejection of disadvantaged minority students by white peers
-- Poor interpersonal relations
-- Racial conflicts within the schools or outside of the school
-- Low achievement rates among minority students
-- Small percentage of minority students in many classrooms (less than 13%)

Policies, Practices and Program Mix to Neutralize the Constraints In School Desegregation Environment

As stated earlier, schools have generally proceeded by subscribing to the theory that optimal results would accrue by implementing school desegregation logistically. Since school desegregation research suggests that this does not occur, it may be auspicious to adhere to a very important planning theorem - neutralize as many constraints in the environment before implementing your plan. (Cantanese and Steiss, 1972) While physical planners heed this theorem (i.e. you can not build a building on top of a swamp unless the swamp has been filled), social planners, ala desegregation planners, in urban school desegregation environments in many instances have chosen to ignore this theorem.

An example of an environmental constraint which school desegregation planners and school officials have often made little effort to neutralize is the low socio-economic status of minority students. St. John (1978) noted that one reason minority students from low socio-economic backgrounds do not benefit from school desegregation is becuase of the frustrations that occur because they are so far behind their middle class counterparts (black and white) academically. Not only does their scholastic achievement tend to remain constant, but their self-esteem and aspiration levels are lowered in many instances. This usually precludes them from getting better jobs and gaining entry to preferred colleges and universities. A program mix that a desegregated school district should consider implementing to neutralize this constraint might include: (1) serving breakfasts, (2) team learning/teaching programs, (3) Big Brother/Big Sister programs, (4) training programs for mothers and (5) programs to diagnose physical and psychological problems that impede learning. These are just some examples of programs that might be included to neutralize low socio-economic status as an ecological constraint. Moreover, it would also be incumbent on those adopting this approach to scrutinize their policies and practices and determine which

should be changed or modified to enhance the possibility that negative environmental constraints will be neutralized.

A Model For Planning and Improving the Delivery of Services

Large and medium sized urban desegregated school districts have frequently been accused of crises management, especially where long range planning and systematic evaluation are concerned. However, it should be recognized that these school districts do constantly face a seemingly never ending series of rapidly developing crises that occur year after year. Many of these crises result from conditions that are only minimally within the control of district administrators. Fluctuating school board and city hall political goals, energy costs and other financial and budgeting pressures, teacher union demands, high unemployment in the community, shifts in federal funding support, and court decisions are only a few of the causes of "administration by crisis."

In an effort to develop a thorough but more easily implemented planning and continuous evaluation/monitoring system, the model for planning and improving the delivery of comprehensive services in urban desegregated schools presented in Figure 1 was designed as a practical, operational alternative for urban districts. The model is based upon national research and demonstration knowledge related to three areas discussed in this paper previously - (1) Commonly Accepted Desegregation Goals, (2) Factors That Research and Desegregation Experience Indicate Impede Desegregation Success and (3) Proposed Program Mixes That Have Been Designed and/or Research Proven To Overcome The Factors That Impede Desegregation Success. These three information bases are used to (1) review and refine local district desegregation goals, (2) define needs assessment data needs to help identify, in a large part, the local factors impeding desegregation through a local needs assessment and (3) identify new, more effective, researched and nationally demonstrated programs which have been shown to address the same

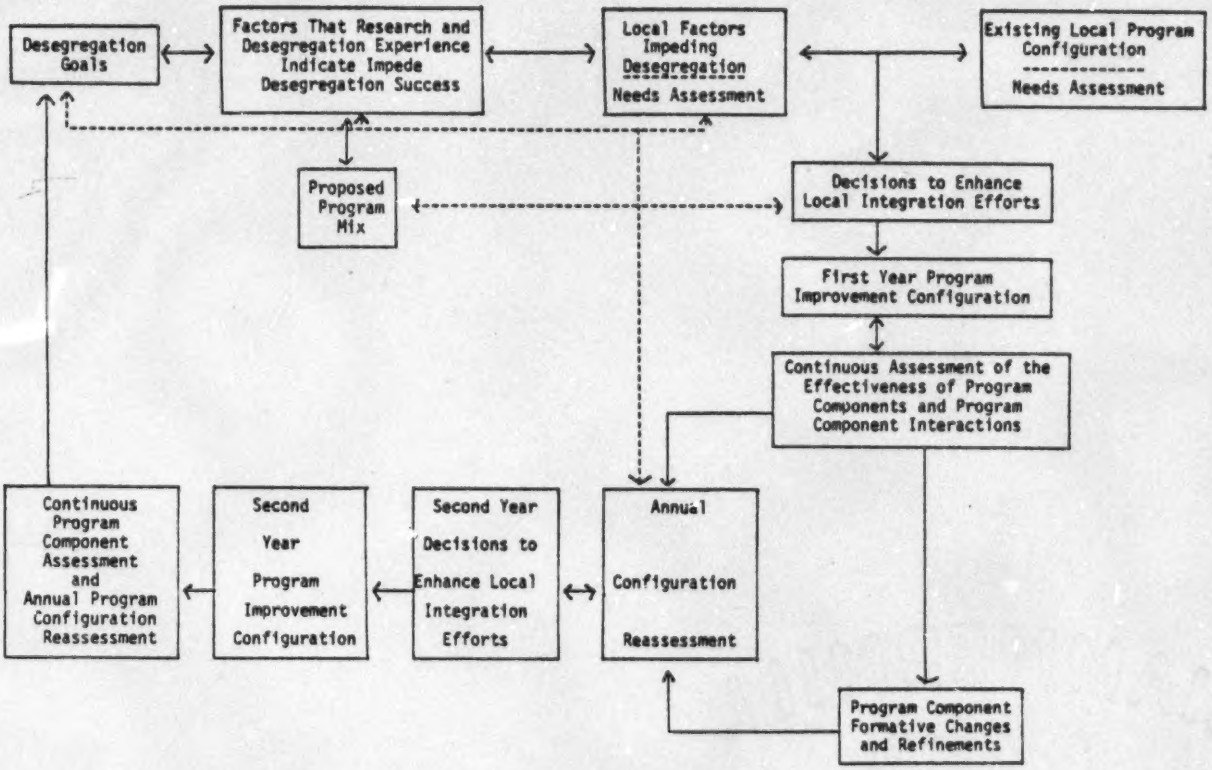
Desegregation Goals
Factors That Research and Desegregation Experience Indicate Impede Desegregation Success
Local Factors Impeding Desegregation Needs Assessment
Existing Local Program Configuration
Needs Assessment
Proposed Program Mix
Decisions to Enhance Local Integration Efforts
First Year Program Improvement Configuration
Continuous Assessment of the Effectiveness of Program Components and Program Component Interactions
Continuous Program Component Assessment and Annual Program Configuration Reassessment
Second Year Program Improvement Configuration
Second Year Decisions to Enhance Local Integration Efforts
Annual Configuration Reassessment
Program Component Formative Changes and Refinements

FIGURE 1: A MODEL FOR PLANNING AND IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES IN URBAN DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

factors that the local needs assessment identifies as being in existence and impeding local desegregation/integration efforts.

After a review and analysis of the local district's existing program services which promote desegregation/integration efforts, the district's planning and decision-making bodies in conjunction with trained and experienced consultant specialists can (1) prioritize the local factors that impede desegregation efforts as identified in the needs assessment,(2) analyze the existing program services and their effects on dealing with these factors and (3) identify new program services that should be undertaken to counteract the locally identified impeding factors. These program decisions are thus based, in a large part, on national research and demonstration efforts, but are also limited by those funds and personnel that can be redirected within the district budget or secured

from external sources. Once these program decisions are made and implemented, the district has a new service program configuration which is composed of new and old programs, new program interactions and new program interaction residual effects.

With a new program improvement configuration, it is strongly recommended that the district undertake a continuous assessment of its old and new program components and the program component interactions. Data from this assessment are necessary if valid decisions are to be made annually regarding the maintenance of existing programs, the positive effect of program interactions, the accurate implementation and stabilization of new programs, and the evaluation of existing programs through formative evaluation induced changes and refinements. Frequently local district evaluations are significantly influenced and limited to student gains on achievement tests. However, recent studies at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas indicate that teacher effectiveness and probably student achievement gain are limited until the new program service being implemented has had time to be stabilized within the district. Moreover, new programs that are adopted from national research and development efforts may frequently be signigicantly changed by districts, schools and teachers when implemented. These changes probably reduce the likelihood that proposed program effects will result as the developers have demonstrated. Without proper evaluation, good service programs that could assist school desegregation may either be discarded before they are stabilized or be altered locally such that previously demonstrated results will not occur from the new "locally adapted" program.

Because of local, state and federal budgeting cycles, annual reassessments, and the development of new program configurations, the continuation of program assessments is an integral part of the model.

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